

Summarised inspection findings

East Linton Primary School Nursery Class

East Lothian Council

7 February 2023

Key contextual information

The nursery class caters for 20 children, aged three to those not yet attending school, at any one time. Children attend for two full days every week and every second Friday. Group A attend on a Monday, Tuesday and alternate Fridays, and Group B attend on a Wednesday, Thursday and alternate Fridays. Children can attend from 08.15 to 17.45. Around half of the children leave at 15.10 when the primary school day ends. The nursery team has recently been extended through a visiting excellence and equity officer and a visiting support teacher. Both have recently taken up post. During periods of remote learning, staff moved quickly to an online platform and the headteacher reports that there was very little negative impact on learning and teaching. Since returning from COVID-19, the school has had high levels of absence among both staff and children. A minority of staff are recently appointed, and teamwork is still developing.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The nursery class and the school have the same vision and values. The vision focuses appropriately on creating safe, happy learning spaces, with a strong focus on nurture and positive relationships. The nine values include respect, collaboration, resourcefulness and reflection. Staff should consider values that are simpler for very young children to understand. This will ensure that they are meaningful and relevant to the nursery context. Staff exemplify the school values very well through their daily interactions with children and families. They are very nurturing in their approaches. Children are thriving in a respectful and enabling environment.
- The recently appointed visiting support teacher and excellence and equity officer, along with the part-time nursery manager, provide a high level of support to the practitioner team. They are approachable and have joined a strong, cohesive team of staff who are highly committed to improving their practice. Visiting officers are building staff capacity by enhancing staff skills in self-evaluation, and tracking and monitoring children's progress.
- The staff team has developed self-evaluation floorbooks. These document aspects of developing nursery practice. Staff evaluate what is working well, which aspects need to change or develop, how this will be taken forward, and how the impact of change will be measured. Staff use this process effectively to improve arrangements for snack time and the development of the creative area. They are using East Lothian Council's guidelines on rich learning environments to audit the playroom and outdoor provision. Staff could align their ongoing improvement activities more closely to the nursery's identified priorities.
- Staff take responsibility for areas within the nursery. There is scope to extend the opportunities for distributed leadership by taking forward aspects of nursery improvement. These leadership roles would support staff to improve further the quality of children's experiences.

- There is a detailed and well-used quality assurance calendar of monitoring activities. Practitioners are benefitting from the strategic guidance from recently appointed leaders. This is helping them prioritise, measure and analyse the impact of their work. The team should consider visiting other centres to observe and share practice. This outward focus will help them build on their strengths and develop their practice.
- Practitioners are self-motivated and willingly use their strengths, skills and experience to take forward improvements. A few staff are undertaking additional qualifications to improve their knowledge and understanding of early years leadership and practice. The team is at an early stage in using current research on early learning and childcare. As planned, staff should ensure an in-depth focus on the national practice guidance, 'Realising the Ambition: Being Me' (2020).

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Children are happy, confident and experience a very positive ethos in the nursery. They have freedom to explore, make choices and follow their own interests. This is both indoors and outside. Staff display warm and nurturing relationships with the children, which helps build children's confidence and self-esteem.
- Practitioners' and children's interactions are very responsive and supportive. Practitioners use supportive dialogue as they play alongside the children. Questioning is used very effectively to extend children's thinking. Most children are now ready for experiences which provide greater challenge. Staff should extend children's play. Practitioners should reflect on the current balance of adult- and child-initiated learning experiences, using the national practice guidance.
- There are clear, definitive spaces throughout the nursery. Children's sustained engagement is improved when the staff team set up the nursery with a wider variety of resources. This promotes creativity, curiosity and enquiry. Children enjoy playing outdoors with a variety of loose parts and gardening activities. They benefit from opportunities for physical activity. There is scope to resource the outdoors more richly to develop further children's investigative skills.
- Practitioners use a range of floorbooks, learning stories and personal plans to capture and record children's learning and achievements. Staff share observations with each other. These inform children's individual learning stories. Parents contribute to the learning stories while visiting the nursery. Children display enthusiasm when reflecting upon their accessible learning folders. Children's interests and voice are documented in floorbooks and learning stories. Staff are working to ensure that the interactions, experiences and spaces also reflect children's voice and achievements.
- At times, practitioners make use of digital activities to support learning. Children enjoy playing games on the interactive whiteboard. Staff could expand their use of digital technologies to support and enrich further learning experiences.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Children benefit from an environment with a wide range of play contexts. They show a strong sense of ownership of the spaces, and freely access activities. Most curriculum areas are represented through play; however resources are too limited in some spaces. As a result, only a majority of children show sustained engagement in their play. Staff plan a range of worthwhile, progressive activities in literacy and numeracy. These could be extended further through play experiences. Staff should also review how to develop the curriculum to offer greater challenge for higher-achieving children.
- Practitioners are highly committed to ongoing training and development. The team is new. They are at an early stage in developing their curriculum rationale. Practitioners use progression frameworks to track learning through the early level experiences and outcomes. This is supporting their understanding of how this links with the environment, and children's play and learning.
- Transitions from home to nursery are well managed. There are enhanced arrangements for those children who require them. Parents reported that they, and their children, were very well supported at points of transition. Staff work very effectively with parents and agencies to ensure that children settle quickly and make secure progress.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Partnerships with families are a strength of the nursery. Parents report that they are welcomed warmly and kept well informed of their children's progress. Practitioners photograph children's achievements and share these with parents in learning stories. An informative noticeboard keeps parents up to date with current nursery learning to enable them to extend and support this at home. Newsletters, online videos and social media allow parents to share the work of the nursery. Staff could consider using a digital platform to share children's achievements with families. Parents enjoy playing with their children at 'Stay and Play' sessions.
- During periods of remote learning, staff made strenuous efforts to keep connected with families. This includes regular email and phone contact. They encouraged parents to join with their children in online learning challenges. For example, families enjoyed finding long and short things at home, or taking part in indoor scavenger hunts. Staff also sent personalised video messages to children and families.
- There is scope for staff to reinstate the community learning opportunities that were in place before COVID-19, including visits into the community, library visits and visits to the elderly. This would extend the opportunities for meaningful and relevant partnership working.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Relationships are calm, positive and supportive. Staff deliver high standards of care. Practitioners' interactions with children and families are consistently respectful and nurturing. Staff report that they are proud of the strong and productive links they have established with their families. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the warmth and friendliness of staff, and the ways in which their children are supported.
- Staff know the children very well. Prior to children starting nursery, practitioners work effectively with families to build relationships and to gather important information. This enables them to fully support children's personal, social and emotional wellbeing, as well as address any identified health needs.
- Staff are positive role models for children. Many show skill in restorative conversations by helping children with strategies to regulate their emotions. Practitioners have focused on the key features of friendship through stories. This is helping children to share, cooperate and show tolerance for other children.
- The nursery displays features of 'Learning Heroes' that have been developed by older children at the primary stages. This includes characters displaying aspiration, resourcefulness and collaboration. The ideas within these resources are worthwhile. However, the displays are not age appropriate, nor can children easily identify with them. Staff plan to develop their own wellbeing characters, which will be more relevant for nursery children. They should also consider making the wellbeing indicators part of their display for parents in the foyer. This will help parents understand how these are taken forward through play activities.
- Children's physical and emotional wellbeing is well supported by regular outdoor play. Staff have skilfully planned a range of activities to encourage both fine and gross motor control. Children are encouraged to risk assess aspects of their outdoor learning.
- Practitioners are fully aware of, and comply, with statutory requirements in relation to early learning and childcare. All staff have received child protection training and are clear about how to keep children safe. Staff also understand potential barriers to learning for individuals and put plans in place to address these. Every child has a personal plan that outlines both care and health needs. These support staff to make targeted interventions to support individual needs. The visiting staff support the team well to take forward specific interventions, particularly for children with more complex needs. Staff are becoming more confident in using visual prompts and timetables. As a result, children feel secure and comfortable with the daily routines. Staff work very effectively with a range of professionals to ensure that each child is well supported to make the best possible progress.

3.2 Securing children's progress

good

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- Most children communicate well using a wide range of vocabulary. Children engage enthusiastically in play and listen to their friends and staff. Children with English as an additional language (EAL) are progressing well and growing in confidence. Children are keen to listen to stories, make marks, and enjoy listening to, and reciting songs and nursery rhymes. Most children can recognise or write their own name. Staff have recently evaluated the indoors spaces. They could offer more literacy-rich experiences across both indoor and outdoor spaces. This should include opportunities for creating stories, a wider range of small world play and a variety of high-quality fiction and non-fiction books.
- Most children display a strong interest in numeracy and are progressing well. They enjoy approaching staff to help make sense of numbers and seek problem solving experiences. Most children can count to ten and beyond. Outdoors, children comment on the features of squares and triangles. They show an early understanding of the difference between three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional shapes. They demonstrate creativity as they paint junk models, bake, and make playdough. Children would benefit from more numeracy-rich opportunities indoors and outdoors to promote investigation, problem solving and exploration.
- There is a supportive and inclusive ethos throughout the nursery with caring practitioners, whom the children respect and trust. Children understand how to support their own wellbeing through daily routines, such as snack and lunchtime. The recently introduced key worker system ensures all children have a key adult responsible for their learning and wellbeing. Practitioners support children's health and wellbeing through nurturing relationships. They track early level experiences and outcomes. Staff should build on this to provide increased challenge and personalisation across all areas of learning.
- Most children are making good progress in literacy, numeracy, health, and wellbeing. There is a tracking system in place to support children's individual progress across the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. This helps practitioners in supporting children from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- Practitioners maintain individual tracking for areas of the curriculum. This needs further development to give a clear overview of learning progress over time for each cohort of children. The plan to develop monitoring and tracking meetings will ensure that children have next steps identified to support and challenge their learning.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.